

## Section 10 Appendix

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### Listening Skills

**1. Attend** Good listening always begins with paying attention to each other as you talk. Look at each other, give eye contact, face each other. Be aware of body language and nonverbal messages. Be as open as possible to listening and understanding. The need to be fully seen and heard is often at the heart of good communication.

**2. Acknowledge and Validate Each Other** This skill is probably the most important of all. Acknowledge the other person with a simple nod of the head and statements like, “Wow, you had a tough day!” or “You sound look tired/sad/happy/scared/angry.” Good listeners are able to temporarily suspend their own feelings and thoughts so they can listen with well controlled judgments and defensive feelings. When you are in conflict with your partner. You may hear your partner saying things that sound threatening and don’t fit into what you believe to be true, and these things may trigger fear, sadness, hurt, disappointment, or anger.

Attempting to acknowledge what your partner is saying, especially during periods of conflict, can begin to have a positive effect on the climate of your relationship.

This kind of empathy forms the basis for love between people.

It is important not to confuse this with agreeing with everything your partner is saying. You may understand but disagree with your partner.

The point is to develop the ability to listen and tolerate someone who is different from you. This requires being aware and managing and controlling your inner reactions, feelings, and behavior even while you may be hearing things that trigger anxieties, hurt, and anger.

**3. Reflect, Summarize, and Paraphrase** Reflecting, summarizing, and paraphrasing (also called mirroring) what your partner says shows that you understand and have heard what your partner is saying. To do this, repeat in your own words what you have heard to be your partner’s points and ask for clarification and confirmation. Summarizing can begin with a statement like, “Let me see if I have gotten what you just said.” If you are inaccurate, ask your partner to clarify so that you can understand. The talker can also ask the listener to summarize what has just been said.

**4. Ask for More Information** Asking for more information indicates your interest in your partner. Ask for more information after a pause in the conversation and continue to ask for more until your partner has no more to say.

**5. Ask Open Questions** Asking open questions to gather or fill in missing information or to clarify confusing information allows an experience to be shared in the talker’s words. Open questions encourage the talker to continue and show your interest in what is being said.

The following are examples of open questions: “Tell me about your meeting with your boss.” “How did your lunch with Mary go and what did you talk about?” “What did you like about the movie?” “What did you feel when Joe started to get angry?”

Try to avoid too many “why” questions, since they tend to put the talker on the spot and force answers the talker may not have. Also, too many questions can limit the natural flow of the talker.

## Talking Skills

### How you talk

Be aware of how you speak: words you use; your tone of voice (inflections); attitudes you bring to your talk. Watch for resentments, anger, blame and criticisms you have. Speak for yourself. Use “I” statements... “When you are late, I feel hurt and disrespected.” Avoid using “You” statements since this tends to trigger defensiveness in others.

### What you talk about

**1. Sharing Your Opinions, Feelings, or Thoughts About Something You Observe** The following are examples of this type of talking: “I noticed this morning during breakfast that when we were talking about having fun together you became very quiet and withdrawn.” “You look like you were uncomfortable with my parents at dinner last night.”

**2. Sharing Your Thoughts** Say what you are thinking, believing, interpreting, or expecting. Be careful to know the difference between thoughts and feelings. The following examples are expressions of thought: “I’m thinking of going to bed early tonight.” “I thinking I’ll go for a walk.” These examples express feelings: “I feel sad and lonely when you leave.” “I really enjoy laughing with you!”

**3. Expressing Your Feelings** -Feelings are best expressed through “I feel” statements: I feel mad, sad, glad, scared. Feelings may also be expressed through descriptions: “I’m sad that John has left.” “I have butterflies in my stomach before I get up to speak.” “When you become angry, I get really scared.” “You” statements can put others on the defensive and sound as if you know what their inner intentions are. “**You** make me so mad when you come home late”; “**You** know it upsets me when you leave dirty dishes in the sink!”

**4. Sharing Your Wants** It is important for you, your partner, and your relationship for each of you to share your wants. For example, your wants could include the following: “I want to relax tonight”; “I want a hug”; “I don’t want . . .” Examples of **your wants for your partner** could include the following: “I want you to feel supported by me” and “I want you to relax and let yourself have some fun tonight.” Examples of **wants for both of you or for your relationship** could include: “I want us to have a good time together this weekend” and “I want us to stay in touch and talk about how each of us feels when we visit your parents next week.” Stating wants to your partner does not mean you will always have them met, but you have made them known.

**5. Make Statements About What You Have Done, Are Doing, or Intend to Do** - These statements are about actions that can be observed by others and are different from feelings and thoughts. Talking about what you will do makes intentions clear and understandable. It also

lets others know you are aware of your behavior and what it means. The following are examples of these types of statements: “I will be at the recital on Tuesday”; “I will not hug you without being asked anymore”; and “When we talk, I will begin to tell you what I am really thinking and feeling.”